

THE MAYOR HOLDS COURT — Mayor Robert M. Lawther found a captive audience Friday at Franklin Elementary School when he visited the second grade class taught by Mrs. Mary Schwab and Mrs. Esther Barto. He

may have picked up some future votes as he explained some of Lakewood's history and discussed current operation of the city.

(Sun photo by Jim Gregg.)

Nothing to bark at

City to collar lawbreakers

By DAN COOK

"No person being the owner of or having charge of any dog, whether licensed or unlicensed, shall permit it to run at large up on any public place, or upon any unenclosed lands, or upon the premises of another."

So states Chapter 505.02 (a) — "Dogs at Large" — of the coded ordinances of the city of Lakewood.

However, either the Lakewood dog population is burgeoning, or an increasing number of owners are becoming careless about the "leash laws".

RECORDS OF THE DIVISION of public health shows that, in 1971, 1125 "complaints and bites" were reported concerning dogs. That figure jumped to 1337 in 1972, when animal warden David Mroczka was called on to pick up 481 errant canines, quarantine 372 of them, and send another 179 to the Animal Protective League.

Most dog owners who are cited for violation of the "Dog at Large" ordinance receive a fine in municipal court. The fine may be suspended for the first offense, but increases as offenses mount up. Fines of \$25 and court costs are not uncommon, according to Lakewood court officials.

Prosecutor Roger Tibbetts told the Sun Post he receives calls "all the time" concerning dogs at large.

"We have two courses of action we can take," he said. "If I know the owner, I'll write him a letter advising him of the complaint.

"In other cases, I refer complaints to our dog warden. Dave has been accused of being overly-aggressive at times, but he's tenacious, and does a great job. He chases down real troublemakers," he said.

ACCORDING TO TIBBETTS, one major problem with prosecuting lax dog owners is that many complaints come in after the fact — and an on-the-spot identification by the warden is required for an arrest.

"We can't arrest them unless we actually see the dog," Tibbetts said, "and few fellow citizens are willing to sign an affidavit stating that they witnessed the dog running at large. It's a real problem, and I don't know what the answer is."

Tibbetts said when a dog is picked up, the owner not only pays the court, but also must pay the pound "\$30 to \$40 for keeping the animal."

He said in the past there have been chronic offenders of the ordinance, but none within the last few months have been repeaters.

"BUT THE WARDEN has to deal with the same owners continually," he said. "By the time a case gets to court, it represents about the third or fourth time the warden has been bothered by the same dog."

Council president Robert E. Wendling said council members receive complaints "in cycles."

"Usually we get a lot in the spring," he said. "Dogs are getting out for the first time after the winter, and they run all over."

"Our warden does an effective job, but it's hard for one man to watch the dogs of 70,000 people," he said.

WENDLING SAID most calls to the councilmen turn out to be from neighbors who want to "get back" at others in the neighborhood for one reason or another. He said the dogs are usually just an excuse for a gripe.

"But there certainly are cases of dogs biting children and so forth," he said. "It's a common suburban problem. Some dog owners just will not cooperate with the ordinance."

to look tax leap

takeover would be a blessing to taxpayers now facing federal, state and municipal tax forms.

"We understand two states will probably be going to this new system next year," Kosydar said, citing Nebraska and South Dakota.

"If they are successful, I think you will see a bandwagon rush in another year. If not, it will just be remembered as another crackpot idea from Washington," Kosydar said.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE PLAN, according to the Ohio official, would come when the Ohio tax is changed to conform with federal law. Although this would abolish such alleged inequities as Ohio's policy toward joint returns, it would also wipe out, according to Kosydar, Ohio's tax break for senior citizens.

Current Ohio law forces a married

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